

## OSTERWOCHE / EASTER WEEK

**Palm Sunday: Palmsonntag**  
**Green Thursday: Gründonnerstag**  
**Good Friday: Karfreitag**  
**Quiet Saturday: stiller Samstag**

**Easter Sunday: Ostersonntag**  
**Easter Festival/ Feast: Osterfest**  
**Easter Monday: Ostermontag**

The Easter period starts in earnest on the Sunday before Easter, Palm Sunday ("Palmsonntag"), commemorating events in the last days of Christ's life. It begins on Palm Sunday and ends on Easter Monday.



### Easter (*Ostern*)

Easter is the most important celebration in the Christian faith. Easter is celebrated in remembrance of Christ's death on a cross, and His resurrection three days later. Its popularity, however, has been overshadowed by Christmas and is mostly celebrated only by Christians.

The Easter celebration begins with Good Friday and extends to Easter Monday, the day after Easter. Here we discuss some of the German traditions related to these days, with an emphasis, of course, on the food.

### Easter Customs Rooted in Meaning

Waving palms on Palm Sunday, eating green foods on the Thursday before Easter, attending church services and spending time with family over the long Easter weekend are all traditions rooted some meaning.

Easter (*Ostern*) is celebrated with colored eggs and candies, Easter egg hunts, rides, fire-wheels, and in some places with bonfires. Good Friday (*Karfreitag*) and the Monday following Easter are legal holidays.

### Symbols

Spring flowers, eggs, chickens, hares and lambs are important Easter symbols. They symbolize the natural world's rebirth after the darkness of winter and Jesus' resurrection after his crucifixion. Lambs also symbolize the sacrifice of Jesus, God's only son.

Germany is in the northern hemisphere so Easter fires are a useful way of getting rid of dead plant material from garden and farms before the growing season begins again. In the pre-Christian Germanic tradition, they also symbolize the return of life and growth in the spring. For Christians, they may symbolize the destruction of Jesus on *Good Friday* and his resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Easter and spring go so well together because the Resurrection of the Savior in the Christian religion is reflected by the "resurrection" of nature after winter. The whole cycle of church feasts from Easter to Whitsun symbolically repeats the story of the life and sufferings of Christ.

Easter in German-speaking countries consists of a combination of the sacred and the secular, of religious traditions coupled with local superstitions. The major thread running through the patchwork of local customs is the triumph of life over death and darkness; the central theme of new life is often carried over into the sym-

for Maundy Thursday, *Gründonnerstag*, calls to mind the belief that a person should eat green vegetables on that day, or else he would be changed into a donkey (greens also make a first appearance in the spring, and many ate an abundance of what was available in preparation for the day-long fast on *Karfreitag*). At this time of the year, the grasses begin to bloom and the sun makes his gradual ascent, driving away the darkness with longer periods of daylight. In keeping with the principal that education lifts one out of darkness, it may be worthy to note that children in the Federal Republic attend school for the first time